DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 269 871 EA 018 472

AUTHOR Gentelia, Beverly; And Others
TITLE Eastern Michigan University: Michigan Youth Leadership for Action. Fostering Effective University, School and Community Relationships.
PUB DATE Feb 86
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (Chicago, IL, February 1986).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Cooperation; Community Involvement; Community Leaders; Community Organizations; Community Resources; Cooperative Programs; Experiential Learning; *Leadership Training; *School Community Programs; *School Community Relationship; Secondary Education; Student Leadership; *Work Experience Programs; Youth Leaders
IDENTIFIERS Eastern Michigan University; Michigan Youth Leadership for Action

ABSTRACT

Eastern Michigan University is in the second year of a pilot program designed to promote law-related education and partnerships between the university and local communities. The collaborators in the project are the university, the Constitutional Rights Foundation, and the Taylor (Michigan) Public Schools. The goal of the project is to develop among high school student participants the knowledge, leadership skills, and attitudes that lead to success at school, at work, and in the community. Program activities during the project's first year included a leadership training retreat, "City Search" internships, work experience internships, a teacher institute, community meetings, school/community projects, an awards ceremony, and publications. The Taylor schools were eager to participate in the project and appointed several key citizens to serve on the project advisory board. Taylor students had an opportunity for a work experience within job sites rarely available to young people or adults. The first year of the project was highly successful. Many advisory board members, employers, community mentors, and community resource guests experienced close contact with the local school for the first time. (GJ)

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Chicago, Illinois
February, 1986

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Eastern Michigan University: Michigan Youth Leadership for Action: Fostering Effective University, School and Community Relationships

Beverly Gentelia,
Placement Specialist,
Taylor Public Schools Job Placement Service

Mary Green, Ph.D.,
Associate Dean and Director
School/Educational Services Center

Jeffrey Pedroza,
Project Coordinator,
EMU/MYLA

Carolyn Pereira,
Director, Chicago Project
Constitutional Rights Foundation

School Educational Services Center
College of Education
Eastern Michigan University
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197

313/487-1060
313/487-3134

EA 018 472

Eastern Michigan University/ Michigan Youth Leadership for Action: Fostering Effective University School and Community Relationships

Introduction

Eastern Michigan University is beginning the second year of a pilot program designed to promote law-related education and partnerships between the university and local communities. The 1985 Eastern Michigan University Youth Leadership for Action Program, the only university-based youth leadership program sponsored by the Constitutional Rights Foundation, involved 45 high school students from four major school districts in southeastern Michigan. During the pilot phase, the Taylor School District was particularly successful in structuring their collaboration with the university in ways which improved the rapport between the District and their community, increased positive news coverage for the District, and created a more positive impression of the school district on city government and the business community.

The Collaborators

Eastern Michigan University

Eastern Michigan University is a multipurpose state university which provides undergraduate programs in liberal arts, science, education, business and public service, health professions and technology. For more than 137 years, EMU has been a state and national leader in the preparation of teachers. The university began as the Michigan State Normal School in 1849 and was the second normal school in the nation to become a four year college institution. The College of Education prepares educators for all teaching, administrative and special service positions in the schools. Educational service, provided at the state, national and international levels, are important components of the University's academic mission.

Recently, EMU established the School/Educational Services Center. The Center is organized to promote and extend the service mission of the College of Education to the educational community. The Center provides leadership in curriculum development and evaluation and in the use of effective teaching and learning practices through its focus on educational improvement.

Constitutional Rights Foundation

The Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF) was formed in 1962 to create law and citizenship programs and instructional materials for schools. Over 1,000 individuals, businesses, law firms and private foundations provide financial support for CRFs programs at the local, state and national level.

The CRF programs and publications are created by a staff of professional writers, educators and staff development specialists in conjunction with content experts in the fields of education, law and business. CRF programs integrate traditional classroom instruction with hands-on experiences, such as instructional simulations and direct contact with persons involved in making the United States systems of justice, government and business work.

The CRF Programs focus on three areas, Law/Government, Youth Leadership and Business Issues. The Law and Government programs bring legal expertise directly into the schools. For example, the lawyer in the classroom program, which is usually co-sponsored by local county bar associations, provides lesson plans that feature classroom discussions led by practicing attorneys. The Statewide Mock Trial Competitions require student teams to study a hypothetical legal case and assume the roles of the attorneys, witnesses, court clerks and bailiffs in an actual courtroom. Municipal, superior and appellate judges volunteer to hear cases, while other judges and attorneys score the presentations. In some states, local winning teams travel to state finals where rounds of competition produce a single winner.

Law Day Conferences feature workshops, panel discussions and debates on topical issues which are presented and moderated by justice professionals. The conferences are planned for entire urban school districts, for single schools or for single classrooms.

Volunteer juvenile court judges, and other juvenile justice professionals visit young people in probation camps in the CRF Judge In The Camp Program. The young adults in the camps assume the roles of judges and decision makers so they experience the complex processes involved in making decisions and with adult guidance develop an appreciation for the decisions themselves.

To supplement each law program, the CRF develops and distributes a variety of high quality curricula and related instructional materials. Books and phamphlets cover criminal, civil, constitutional and international law. In addition, CRF trains thousands of educators each year in effective methods of teaching law related education.

The Business Programs include Business Issues in the Classroom and the Business Leadership Conference. The Issues program requires students to work with conflicting considerations in business decisions presented to them in the form of case studies, role playing and simulation games. The Leadership Conference brings together students, school superintendents and business leaders to explore and create leadership development programs in high schools which use business and community resources.

The Youth Leadership Programs include Youth Leadership for Action and the Youth Action Center for Positive Change. In these programs students participate in leadership development activities and become actively involved with community projects, serve internships in local businesses and interact with representatives of local government. The goal is for students to become leaders in their communities by developing citizenship, work related skills and a community service spirit.

Taylor Public Schools

Taylor, Michigan is a southwestern suburb of Detroit, Michigan covering 24 square miles, with a population of approximately 79,000 people. The majority of the residents are blue collar workers who have been devastated by Michigan's recent economic recession.

In 1972, the Taylor Schools had 22,400 students enrolled in 31 schools. There are currently 22 schools and 13,947 students. Twenty three percent of the student popluation is considered to be transient.

From 1972 to 1982 Taylor received more negative publicity on the front pages of local and state newspapers and television than most Michigan School districts. There were teacher strikes, parent protests, millage defeats, and school closings. All art, music, physical education and most extra-curricular programs were eliminated and bus transportation was reduced. A large number of teachers were laid off from work, and as late as 1983 the "bumping process" known to many Michigan districts, moved teachers from high schools to junior high schools and from areas of their primary preparation into areas for which they were not prepared. The negative publicity brought about a serious lack of community support for the schools which escalated into more negative publicity and repeated millage defeats.

However, Taylor has implemented a school improvement plan and there are signs of change and success. The District hired new central office administrators. The Committee of 100, which includes senior citizens, parents, teachers, support staff, administrators and students, was formed to develop more positive effective school and community relationships.

The Committee of 100 approved a new imaging slogan for the District - "Striving for Excellence". A new district logo was designed, the schools were painted and a site improvement plan was implemented at each building.

The Staff Development Department began an innovative staff development plan, with a focus on improving school climate and teacher morale and effectiveness at the building level. The Staff Development Department was renamed the School Improvement Department and a curriculum improvement focus was initiated to bring continuity to the District objectives, curriculum, instructional materials, testing and staff development practices.

The Taylor District is working hard at "Striving for Excellence" and frequently includes EMU's College of Education in research and demonstration projects designed to continue their fight to establish more effective relationships with their community.

EMU/MYLA Project Activities

In 1985 EMU received $50,000 from the Michigan legislature to conduct a youth leadership project. The EMU/MYLA Program, a collaborative venture among four Michigan School Districts, the Constitutional Rights Foundation and EMU's School/Educational Services Center conducted a pilot program during the 1985 calendar year. To accomplish the Project objectives a partnership among the EMU's College of Education, local school districts, EMU Departments with secondary education program majors in the social sciences, leaders from local communities, private business, and social service agencies was formed. The goal of the partnership was to develop among high school student participants, the knowledge, leadership skills, and attitudes that lead to success at school, work, and in the community. The Program objectives were as follows.

1. To increase student knowledge of business, governmental, and public service organizations.

2. To develop skills which will help students demonstrate leadership among their peers in their community high schools.

3. To assist students in designing strategies to work with school administrative staff and teachers on their school campuses.

4. To work with school administrators, teacher-sponsors and student leaders to create and complete leadership projects at each participating high school.

5. To increase student awareness and sensitivity to people of differing ethnic, racial, and sometimes socioeconomic backgrounds.

6. To provide career and work exploration opportunities through youth internships in government and business.

7. To engage students in community activities that will develop an understanding of the value of citizen participation as a vehicle for improving their school and communities.

Twelve high schools in the Detroit, Flint, Taylor, and Ypsilanti School Districts participated in the project. The EMU/MYLA Program theme was "Youth Unemployment". Using a variation of the Youth Leadership for Action Program model, and materials developed by the Constitutional Rights Foundation, Eastern Michigan University initiated the Michigan Youth Leadership for Action Program. The program is the first campus-based law-related education program of the CRF and the first campus-based law-related education program for high school students in Michigan.

Program Activities

Program Advisory Board

An EMU/MYLA Program Advisory Board comprised of representatives from the University, and the local communities was formed and convened in April 1985. The Advisory Board met again in December 1985 at the EMU/MYLA Project Presentation/Awards Ceremony.

Leadership Training Retreat

Community mentors, public and private agency representatives, school district liasons, and University personnel participated in the Leadership Training Retreat on the EMU Campus. The student participants spent three days at the Retreat defining leadership, investigating how leaders behave, and developing a leadership skill-building plan.

"City Search" Internships

Two four-day internships occurred in both public and private agencies in the students' home communities during early June. Student participants shadowed and interviewed employees on-site, while sponsors guided the student participants through activities that provided knowledge and understanding of the workplace.

Work Experience Internship

A second internship experience occurred during July and Agust, 1985. The internships were six week summer work experiences for the student participants. The work experiences took place in the students' home communities, in a business or public service agency. Community mentors were selected from each work site to provide support and guidance for each student participant. The internships were evaluated by both the student participants and their community mentors.

Teacher Institute

Approximately 100 teachers from selected school districts in Michigan's Ingham, Genessee, Oakland, Saginaw, Washtenaw, and Wayne counties were invited to attend a one-day staff development institute for social studies teachers at EMU. Carolyn Pereira, Director of the Chicago Office of the Constitutional Rights Foundation, led a conference planning team of school district and University representatives.

Community Meetings

Student participants, community mentors, advisory board members, teacher sponsors, and work supervisors shared program related experiences and planned for the School/Community Projects at dinner meetings held in the participating cities.

School/Community Projects

The students took the knowledge and skills gained from their experience back to their high schools. In the Fall Semester 1985, with the assistance of a teacher-sponsor and a community mentor, the students designed and implemented a leadership project. Among the suggested school/community projects were: planning a law day; compiling a list of laws dealing specifically with "Youth Unemployment"; utilizing the media (newspapers, radio, television to make the community more aware of problems related to youth unemployment; and compiling a list of social agencies that deal with youth unemployment.

Awards Ceremony

The first annual EMU/MYLA Project Presentation/Awards Ceremony was held at Eastern Michigan University at the final Advisory Board Meeting. This final activity of the 1985 EMU/MYLA Program allowed the student participants to make formal project presentations to the Advisory Board. This gathering also provided for experience sharing among student participants, advisory board members, teacher sponsors, and community mentors. Students made formal presentations, and awards were presented to all EMU/MYLA participants, including school district liaisons, teachers and community mentors.

Publications

A program brochure was produced and widely distributed throughout the four target districts and a newsletter entitled, "Youth Leadership:, was produced by the student participants. "Youth Leadership" will be published on a quarterly basis, with a second edition planned for January, 1986. The EMU/MYLA Program was featured in the Constitutional Rights Foundation publication, "The Legal Circle." News articles featuring the EMU/MYLA Program were also in the following newspapers: The Eastern Educator (EMU), The Eastern Echo (EMU), The Ann Arbor News, and The MELLUS Newspapers. News articles are being planned for The Detroit News, The Detroit Free Press, The Ypsilanti Press and the school newspapers of Detroit Kettering, Flint Northwestern, and Ypsilanti High Schools.

Fostering Effective School and Community Relationships

When EMU selected the Taylor Schools, to participate in the MYLA project they were eager for the opportunity. The District viewed participation in the program as an additional way to further their school improvement plan. They saw an opportunity for students to gain leadership training, to earn money while engaged in a meaningful work experience and to practice leadership skills by planning and implementing a community service project. They saw many staff curriculum development advantages for teachers. And the Social Studies teachers in the District did become more familar with the CRF programs and instructional materials. They were eager to have key city leaders observe teachers working with a University on activities designed to benefit young adults and the community.

When the District invited community leaders to serve on the Project Advisory Board they made a number of excellent choices. Mavis McKinney, Staff writer with the MELLUS Newspapers, a daily paper serving approximately eleven southwestern Michigan cities and 350,000 people, was invited to serve as an advisory board member. Camero G. Friebe, Mayor of Taylor, and Joy Phillips, Director of Economic Development for the City joined the Board along with Edward Kaechele, President of the Taylor Board of Education. Ms. Phillips is a lawyer and a member of the Wayne County Bar Association and Mr. Kaechele is a lieutenant with the Taylor Police Department. They are knowledgable about the law and have expertise in juvenile justice issues. The advisory board members also had access to all major service groups (Rotary, Kiwanis etc.) in Taylor. Beverly Gentelia, Coordinator of Job Placement Services was appointed as the District's liaison to EMU and served as a member of the Advisory Board.

EMU appointed Arthur Timko, a Taylor resident and Director of WEMU, a public radio station serving a large area of southeastern Michigan, including the city of Taylor.

Ms. Gentilia contacted personnel administrators from the Heritage Hospital, Wayne Cablevision, Mellus Newspapers and City Hall to find community mentors, 4 day internship sites and summer job opportunities for the students. The contacts were positively received by the business community and each agency or business agreed to participate.

Although there are three high schools in Taylor, the District, in consultation with EMU, selected the Taylor Center High School as the pilot school. This made the Program more manageable for the District and assured the students of peer support when planning and conducting community service projects in their school.

Student applications were distributed at the School and reviewed by teachers and administrators. The criteria for student selection was "teacher perception of leadership potential". The idea was to select "second tier" students rather than those who are always elected or selected by teachers or peers for special programs.

The University invited the Advisory Board members and community mentors to the campus on three occasions. The first was an Advisory Board meeting to orient them to the Program and to solicit their input and assistance. The Leadership Training Retreat gave the community leaders an opportunity to come to campus to actively participate in the instructional portion of the Program. The "significant adults" also were invited to attend the Awards Ceremony Dinner.

The students had an opportunity for a work experience and exposure to the various departments within the job site rarely available to young people or adults. For example, the student who worked at the Heritage Hospital worked in the administrative office in the morning and in the afternoon she worked with patients under the supervision of the physical therapy staff. After the six week program the staff was so pleased with her work that she was hired by them for an additional month and invited to return the following summer. She plans to pursue a career in physical therapy.

The student assigned to spend her six weeks with the MELLUS Newspapers spent time with staff writers visiting area police stations on the "police beat". She also participated in an interview of the Taylor School District Superintendent and worked several days in the circulation and classified advertizing departments. She wrote an article that was published and her work "supervisors" reported her so quick at learning that they requested she return to their department.

For their community service project the Taylor students, with the assistance of their community mentors and teacher sponsors, prepared a slide-talk presentation designed to inform others at the Taylor Center High School about problems related to youth unemployment. The presentation also tells others about their experiences in the EMU/MYLA Program.

The slide-talk program was presented to all eleventh grade social studies classes this year. In addition, they are making presentations to service groups, like Rotary and the Chamber of Commerce. Their personal goal is to double the student participation in the program for 1986. They are contacting employers and service groups until each student has developed one additional job site for a Taylor student for 1986.

Conclusion

The EMU, CRF and Taylor School District collaboration on the Youth Leadership for Action Program was highly successful. The District, Foundation and University both report that the news coverage and other positive impressions about the Program were excellent and did indeed continue to improve the relationships among the University, School District and Community.

Many Advisory Board members, employers, community mentors and community resource guests experienced close contact with their local school district for the first time. For some it was their first experience on the EMU campus, while for others it was their first contact with any institution of higher education. Words like -- "assertive, self-starter, learns quickly, conscientious, bright, dependable, punctual, willing to learn, approached even the "drudge" jobs with enthusiasm, and asked for work" were used by the mentors and employers to describe the Taylor students. Of course they were not perfect and some of the weaknesses noted were -- "need to develop grammatical phone skills, too quiet and unassertive, attendance and punctuality need work".

If the District and University Staff Project were asked to report the single most important benefit they would quote the following work placement evaluation submitted by one of the Taylor student's employers.

> "..... working with our student gave those of us here who see only the adult world a unique opportunity to view a student through different eyes. The experience gave us a dose of teen-age life and served to remind us that our educators are, indeed, doing an excellent job of educating our future leaders."